May 2014 Update

At month's close, the contracting process with Xerox is almost concluded. As previously noted, as soon as Xerox is on board, their first task is to review the interface design plans from our MIS contractor, Ciber, to connect our MIS system Ceres with the Xerox EBT Host. Xerox also will begin working with our retailers to ready them for connecting to Xerox for online EBT transactions.

Through the dogged persistence of the project leadership and state team, our MIS EBT project is still on time, despite the delays over the change in EBT contractor and the second procurement process. The original projected schedule (set over a year ago) named June 1, 2014 as the beginning of the next phase (Development/Implementation), and we will be holding our first Implementation Meeting with the full project management team the first week in June.

There is actually relatively little "development" involved in the project, as Ceres (Vermont's system name) is an MIS already in operation for several years in three Mountain Plains WIC state agencies. The MIS will be transferred to Vermont and operated on state servers by state IT staff. The only development work of note is the adjustments necessary to use Ceres for online EBT, as the Mountain Plains states currently use either paper vouchers (UT, CO) or offline EBT (WY).

State WIC staff have begun the process of configuring Ceres for our WIC operations, a process we call "Vermontizing" the MIS. This involves reviewing all the pulldown menus, checklists, interview prompts, food packages, printouts and other user interfaces, to make sure they reflect our WIC program.

Information on all our current WIC vendors has already been uploaded, and work has begun to convert existing WIC participant information from our mainframe database to Ceres specs, allowing for upload of each District Office's caseload prior to rollout.

The Readiness Coordinator Network (RCN), our cadre of representatives from each District Office, continues to meet monthly, communicate project news to local WIC staff, and provide feedback to the project team. RCN members have also taken on projects that are part of our "Clinic Enablement" subproject. They are currently concluding their site surveys of all main and outreach clinics, documenting important information about power sources and internet and wireless access; this information will help the state team plan and implement the necessary network and other modifications necessary for clinic access to Ceres. Procurement orders have been issued for computers, screens, signature pads and other equipment for clinics, also.

The state team wants to thank everyone involved for their persistence and determination to successfully complete tasks and stay on schedule. On to the next phase!